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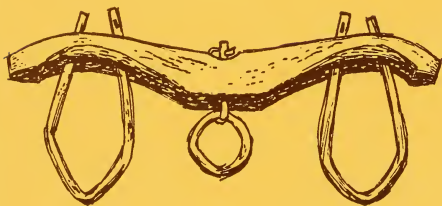
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Schrader, Fred L.

Abraham Lincoln "The Pioneer"

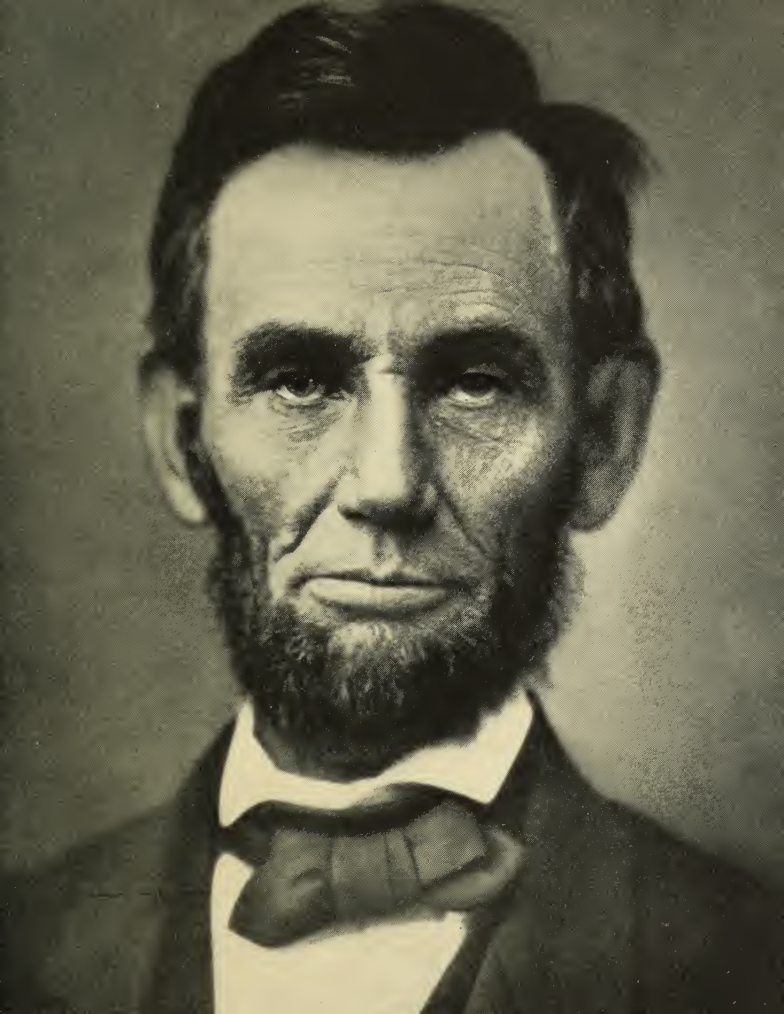
LINCOLN ROOM




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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

"The Pioneer"

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Presented to

THE TEXAS COMPANY

New York City—Feb. 20, 1952

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By

FRED L. SCHRADER

President

Chicago & Illinois Midland Railway Company
Springfield, Illinois

Historical Data Used Herein Condensed from
“Lincoln’s New Salem”

By

DR. BENJAMIN P. THOMAS
Springfield, Illinois

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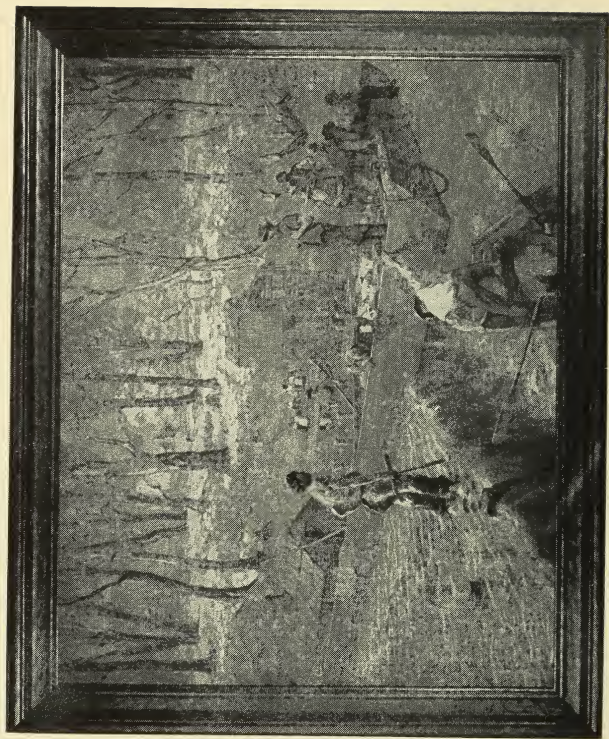
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

"The Pioneer"

One who lives in Springfield, Illinois, where Abraham Lincoln lived and had many formative years of his life cannot help but develop a full recognition of the Lincoln influence on the local community life, as well as the national life.

Mr. Lincoln, with his associates of New Salem and Springfield, typifies the true American Pioneer, and his life's story illustrates the cost in toil, sweat, and tears of our present way of life and its relative affluence.

It seems that we should halt occasionally for a look backward to consider just what it took in fortitude, self-sacrifice, self-denial, imagination, and patience to make it possible for us to have an inheritance the like of which never presented itself before to mankind in the history of this world. We are prone to be careless in our thinking about our present situation. We take our modern form of life for granted and seem not to realize that those before us paid a dear price for it. We survive and progress only on the fruits of our own labor or that of someone else.



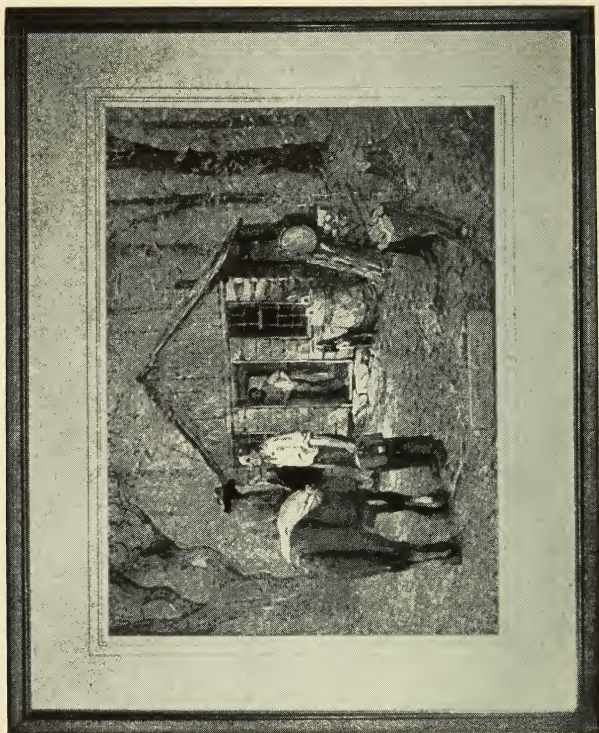
PIONEER TRANSPORTATION

Perhaps a backward look will cause us to lose some of our smugness and complacency. Perhaps after such a look we will want to make sure that our children are brought up, through actual experience, to know what it is to do without to the end that they shall have keener appreciation of, and place a higher value on, the modern way of life with all its conveniences and luxuries.

This thought was illustrated by a Presbyterian Minister last spring when he was addressing a graduating class of a small Central Illinois high school. He turned to the assembled parents of the graduates and said, "Don't make the mistake of shielding your children from work and all deprivation. Give them an opportunity to understand, through actual experience, what our heritage cost our forefathers. Let them understand what it means to live with only a 'bedroom and path'".

Let us understand that only the key to the past will unlock the future and that work is the salt of the earth.

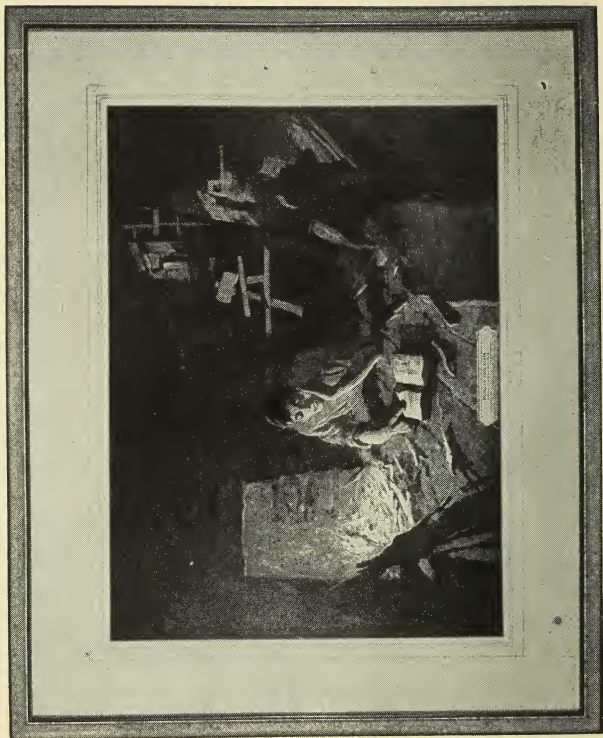
It is the hope that an examination of the life of Abraham Lincoln at New Salem, Illinois, will cause us to cherish with greater fervor the privilege of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in God's greatest reservation for human development.



LINCOLN AT ONSTOTT COOPER SHOP

The village of New Salem served as the backdrop for one of the greatest character building incidents in the experience of mankind. It was there that Abraham Lincoln changed from a gawky, uncouth, unlearned, frontier boy and began the development of his latent ability for leadership which was to leave its everlasting mark on the face of this nation. Other personal characteristics were permitted a natural growth—his physical prowess, his business ability, his square dealing. There he had his only and very brief experience as a soldier. He studied grammar, mathematics, literature, learned to be a surveyor, a speaker, a debater, and finally acquired a rudimentary knowledge of law. He became more or less of a country politician, he made lifelong friendships, and found his first love, which he lost through death. Above all, these experiences taught him to understand the feelings and the ambitions of the common man.

In 1829 James Rutledge and John Cameron had a grant from the Illinois Legislators to build a dam in the Sangamon River. They expected to develop water power for operating a saw and grist mill. They picked a location which seemed to them to have good conditions as to volume of water, etc., and, besides, the bluffs along the river at that point pro-



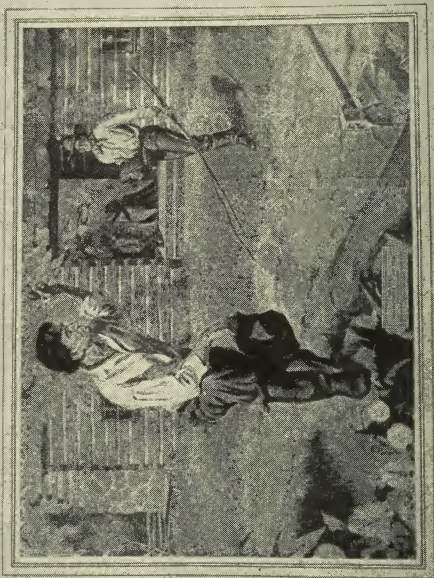
PIONEER EDUCATION

vided what they considered a good site for a village. Soon after the site was selected and the dam and mill constructed, Samuel Hill and John McNeill opened a store up in the bluffs not far from the dam, and William Clary started a saloon. This provided the usual beginning of a pioneer village—a mill, a store, a grocery, and a saloon. In the fall of 1829 the village was planned and laid out and was named New Salem with Samuel Hill as the Postmaster.

Rapidly thereafter others came—Henry Onstott, the cooper; John Allen, a young physician and a graduate of Dartmouth; Denton Offut opened a store and at the same time rented the mill. Offut brought with him Abraham Lincoln, who in that year of 1831 was 22 years of age. Lincoln had worked for Offut on a flatboat, and he brought him to New Salem to work in the store and run the mill. The Armstrongs, Clarys, Greenes, Potters, and others formed the nucleus of the surrounding population.

The prospect of New Salem's becoming a good river town attracted many new settlers, and the village reached its peak of population in 1832—about twenty-five families.

The village had no church; but services were held in the school house just south of the village near



GOIN' FISHIN' — LINCOLN AND JACK KELSO

the cemetery, and sometimes in the homes of the various residents.

As to the history of the town of New Salem, its customs, and ways of life, I am going to offer here today some paragraphs from the book "Lincoln's New Salem," the author of which is my good friend Dr. Benjamin P. Thomas of Springfield, Illinois.

"It was a typical pioneer town. Almost everything needed was produced in the village or the surrounding countryside. Cattle, sheep and goats grazed on the hillsides. Hogs rooted in the woods and wallowed in the dust and mud of the road. Gardens were planted about the houses; while wheat, oats, corn, cotton and tobacco grew in the surrounding fields. Nine tenths of the people lived in log houses and cabins the other tenth either in brick or framed houses. They lived generally on bacon, eggs, bread, coffee. Potatoes were not much used, ten bushels was a large crop and more than was used in a family in a year. Sweet potatoes were raised easily. The wheat crop was very good, corn was very promising. Almost all kinds of fruit grew there spontaneously. Tobacco grew well.

"All the houses in New Salem, except Hill's residence, were one story high. Occasionally they had a loft above. With few exceptions they had one or



LINCOLN — THE STUDENT

two rooms. Writing of the early one-room house, Onstott said: 'At meal time it was all kitchen. On rainy days when all the neighbors came there to relate their exploits, how many deer and turkeys they had killed, it was the sitting room. On Sunday when the young men all dressed up in their jeans, and the young ladies in their best bow dresses, it was all parlor. At night it was all bed-room.'

"The custom of all sleeping together on the floor was necessitated by the size of the houses and the distance that people had to travel to social functions. Peck said of it: 'On the arrival of travelers or visitors, the bed clothing is shared with them, being spread on the puncheon floor, that the feet may project towards the fire. . . . All the family, of both sexes, with all the strangers who arrive, often lodge in the same room. In that case, the under garments are never taken off, and no consciousness of impropriety or indelicacy of feeling is manifested. A few pins, stuck in the wall of the cabin, display the dresses of the women and the hunting shirts of the men.'

"Most settlers in the New Salem vicinity made their living from the soil. However, the women worked harder than the men. They prepared the food, bore and cared for the children, spun thread,

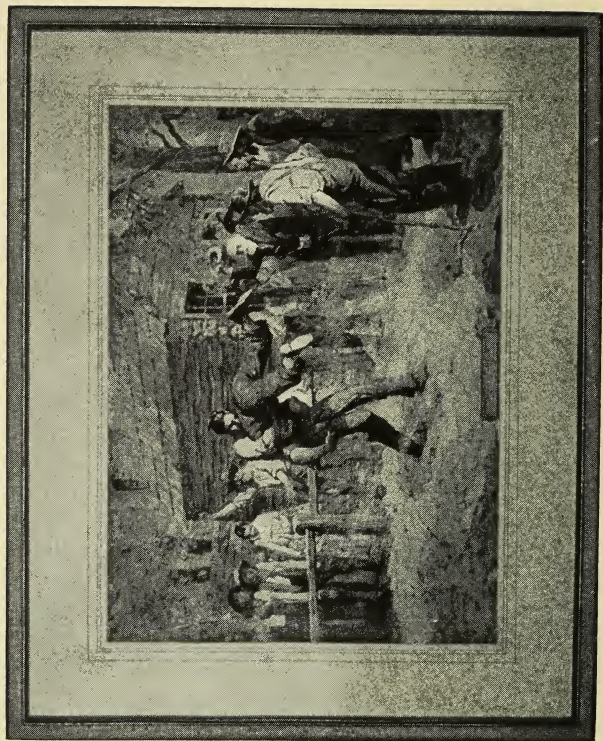


LINCOLN — THE RAIL SPLITTER

wove cloth and made clothes, churned the butter, made soap and candles, and performed most of the humble, humdrum, necessary tasks. An English traveler noted that central Illinois was 'a hard country for women and cattle.'

"Marriageable girls did not stay single long. A man often outlived two wives, and sometimes three. Families were large, and babies came in annual crops. 'Granny' Spears of Clary's Grove, a little old woman whose chin and nose nearly met, officiated at more than half the births in the community. When weaned, usually by the almanac, youngsters began to eat cornbread, biscuits, and pot likker like grownups. The fittest survived and the rest 'the Lord seen fitten to take away.'

"Cooking was done over the open fire, sometimes on a 'flat oven,' or in a 'Dutch oven'; and with skillet, frying pan, iron pot, and kettle. Stoves were unknown, and matches were just coming into use. The basis of the diet was cornmeal, prepared in every way from mush to 'corn dodgers,' the latter being often hard enough 'to split a board or fell a steer at forty feet.' This was supplemented by lye hominy, vegetables, milk, pork, fish and fowl. Honey was generally used in place of sugar. In summer grapes, berries and fruit were added to this fare. The



LINCOLN — THE WRESTLER

women made preserves, but most families used them only on special occasions or when company came. Ned Potter had a sugar camp and Mrs. Potter's maple sugar 'was legal tender for all debts.'

"Each family produced most of what it used, although the presence of craftsmen in the village indicates some division of labor. But even craftsmen had gardens, and some of them bought farms; while farmers occupied the winter months with some sort of handicraft, producing articles for personal use or for sale. Almost every family kept a cow. Beside the houses gigantic woodpiles mounted during summer and fall, and dwindled as winter passed. Rain barrels caught the 'soft' water that dripped from eaves. Lye for soap-making was leached from wood-ashes in hoppers in back yards. Drinking water was obtained from wells, one of which was dug beside the Rutledge tavern and another near the Lincoln-Berry store.

"New Salem had a relatively healthy site; but it was not immune to the malarial fever, typhoid and ague with which the Sangamon country was afflicted. The latter disease was so common on the frontier that settlers hardly regarded it as a disease at all. 'He ain't sick,' they said, 'he's only got the ager.' In the early thirties there were cholera epidemics in the

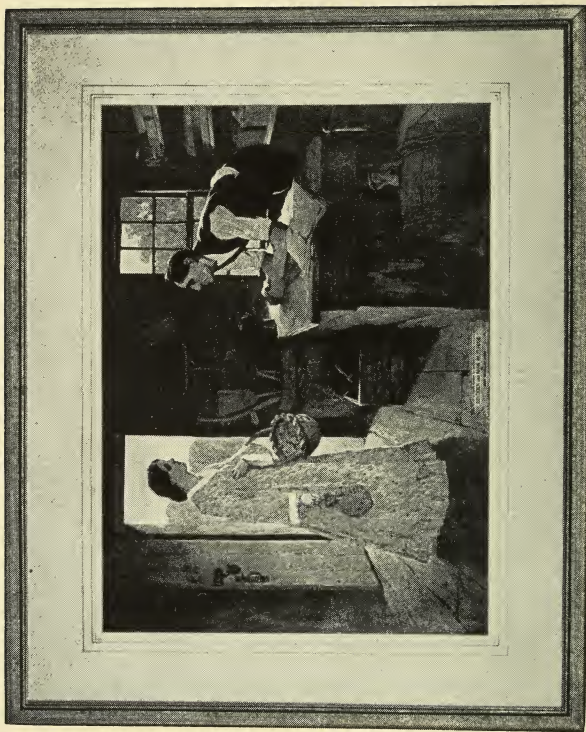


LINCOLN — THE SOLDIER

vicinity and in 1836, smallpox was prevalent. But settlers consoled themselves with the argument that these diseases occurred only in the summer months, and that there were no 'lingering complaints like the consumption' with which so many Easterners were afflicted.

"Pioneer remedies were a combination of domestic experience, superstition and lore. Whiskey, purgatives, bitters made from roots and barks, brimstone, sulphur, scrapings from pewter spoons, gunpowder and lard, and tobacco juice were tried for various complaints. Cayenne pepper in spirits on the outside, and whiskey within, were good for stomach ache. A piece of fat meat, well peppered, and tied around the neck was a common treatment for colds and sore throat. A bag of pounded slippery elm over the eye was supposed to draw out fever. Raw potato poultice was tried for headache. The breaking out of eruptive diseases was hastened by doses of a concoction made from sheep dung known as 'nanny tea.' A seventh son could supposedly cure rash by blowing in children's mouths.

"With many communities entirely dependent upon such homemade remedies or upon the prescriptions of local 'yarb and root' doctors, New Salem was fortunate in having Doctor Allen as a



LINCOLN AND ANN RUTLEDGE — LINCOLN & BERRY STORE

resident. Young Doctor Regnier, stout, witty, eccentric, the son of a French physician, was a capable colleague of Allen's. Their judgment and experience were invaluable to the community. Like most pioneer doctors, they worked under handicaps, for the self-reliant frontiersmen called the doctor only when home remedies had failed, and drastic treatment was demanded. There was reason for their reluctance, for even educated doctors like Allen and Regnier used treatments of appalling severity. They 'purged, bled, blistered, puked, and salivated.'

"Much of the whiskey was made in or near the town. Lincoln said that he worked the latter part of one winter 'in a little still-house, up at the head of a hollow.' In all grain growing regions where transportation was difficult whiskey was distilled on a wholesale scale. A horse could carry about four bushels of corn in the form of grain, and the equivalent of twenty-four bushels in the form of liquor. Besides the economic motive, there were other reasons for whiskey making. Whiskey was a standard remedy and preventive of disease. Some people regarded alcohol as a necessity for persons engaged in strenuous work. Temperance agitation had made some headway and was destined to spread rapidly during the next decade.

LINCOLN — THE ARBITER

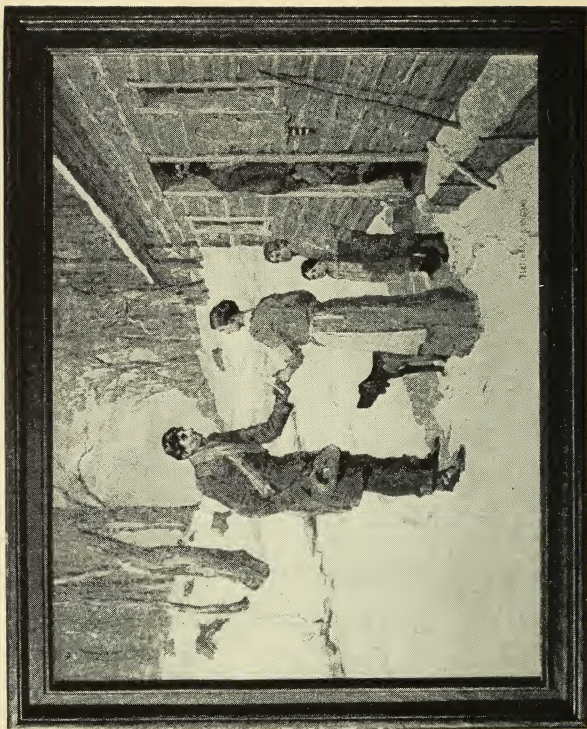


“On the frontier men settled their disputes with fists, feet and teeth as often as they resorted to the courts; or fought first and sued each other afterward. Sometimes they fought for the sheer love of fighting.

“Denton Offut bragged continually of Lincoln’s mental and physical might. He claimed that his clerk could outrun, throw or whip any man in the community. The Clary’s Grove boys were willing to concede his intellectual superiority. That was immaterial to them. But physical honors at New Salem had ‘to be won before they were worn.’ Soon Jack Armstrong challenged Lincoln to a wrestling match.

“Lincoln accepted, and the town turned out to see the fun. Bill Clary and Offut laid a bet of ten dollars, while others wagered knives, trinkets, money and drinks.

“Armstrong was a formidable opponent, experienced, hard, and heavy-set. Lincoln stood six feet four inches, and weighed 185 pounds. He had been a recognized champion in his former home. The two men circled warily, grappled and twisted, neither able to throw the other. Then Armstrong began to get the worst of it. Unwilling to see their leader go down, Armstrong’s friends rushed in. Lincoln, thoroughly aroused, backed against Offut’s store, denounced them for their treachery and of-



LINCOLN — THE POSTMASTER

ferred to fight any or all of them individually. None accepted, and Armstrong and Lincoln finally shook hands, and agreed to call the match a draw. From that time Lincoln had no better friends than Armstrong and his wife, Hannah.

"The match with Armstrong was an important event in Lincoln's life. It gave him the reputation for courage and strength that was so essential to success on the frontier, and convinced his associates that he 'belonged.' It gave him standing with the whole Greene-Armstrong-Clary-Watkins clan. While his physical prowess commanded their admiration and respect, his honesty and truthfulness soon won their confidence. During his remaining years in New Salem, they followed and supported him in anything he did.

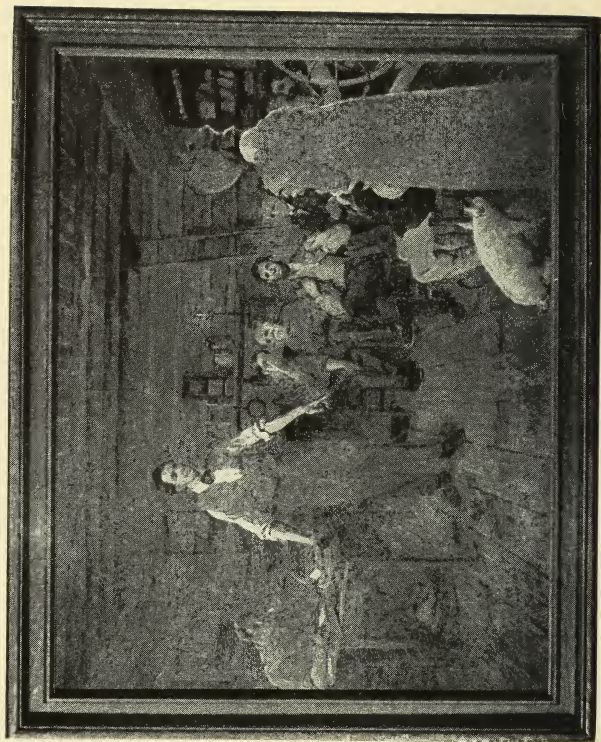
"It was in this environment that Lincoln lived from 1831 until 1837, and the rugged individualism of this place contributed much toward the development of Lincoln into a man of great power, honesty, and forthrightness.

"In 1832, 'encouraged,' as he said, 'by his great popularity among his immediate neighbors, he determined to run for the State Legislature.' In mid-summer when the election was held he was defeated. In the meantime, however, he had had his experi-



LINCOLN — THE SURVEYOR

ence as a soldier in the Black Hawk War, being mustered out as a Captain. His defeat left him out of a job. Soon, however, an opportunity presented itself for him to become a merchant. He joined up with William F. Berry in the conduct of a grocery store. Places where liquor was sold by the drink were called groceries. The evidence has it that Lincoln and Berry split up because Lincoln did not condone the sale of liquor by the drink through the medium of a grocery, of which he was part owner. At the time of the dissolution of the partnership Lincoln's fortune was at a low ebb; in debt, and out of a job, he said he was reduced to the elemental problem of securing bread to keep body and soul together. He had no intention of evading his obligations. Soon thereafter, to be exact, May 7, 1833, he was appointed postmaster at New Salem, which position he retained until May 30, 1836. The position of postmaster was not confining and he had many other opportunities to serve; such as splitting rails, helping at the mill, acting as agent for the newspaper Sangamo Journal, serving as election clerk, and doing surveying. There is ample evidence of Lincoln's skill as a surveyor. Disputants over land boundaries frequently submitted their controversies to him, confident of his honesty and competence.



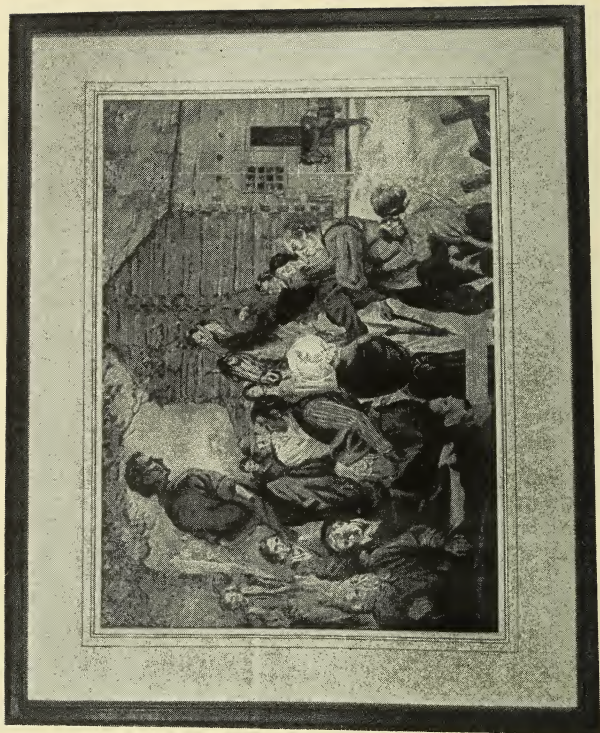
LINCOLN — THE LAWYER

He surveyed the towns of New Boston, Bath, Albany, and Huron, and resurveyed the town of Petersburg. Roads that Lincoln surveyed are still in use.

“As early as 1832 he thought of studying law; but hesitated. In 1833 he bought a book of legal forms with the aid of which he drew up mortgages, deeds, and other legal instruments for his friends whom he never charged for these services. He even argued minor cases before Squire Bowling Green.

“In the spring of 1834 Lincoln decided to run for the Legislature again, and on August 4 was elected easily. As a new member Lincoln played a minor part in the Legislature’s work. He received a few unimportant committee assignments, and drafted and introduced a few bills. He saw skillful lobbyists in action and learned at first hand of the log-rolling that goes on behind the scenes in legislative halls. Saying little, he observed closely and learned much.

“At about this time the 25-year-old Lincoln had his first romance. Toward women in general he was indifferent and shy. He boarded at the Rutledge tavern where he became well acquainted with James Rutledge’s daughter Ann, a pretty, unaffected, lovable girl of 19 with blue eyes and auburn hair; but in the summer of 1835 Ann became ill, and on



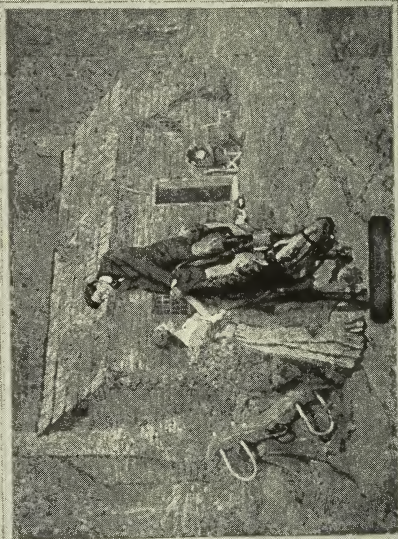
LINCOLN — THE CAMPAIGNER

August 25th of that year passed to her eternal reward. Lincoln was distraught, for days he could not eat or sleep. As his depression continued he was persuaded to leave New Salem with its memories and he went to live at Bowling Green's, where he pulled himself together.

"In the summer of 1836 he was a candidate for re-election to the Legislature. His campaign was similar to the previous ones. His views were announced in a letter to the editor of the Sangamo Journal, which read in part—"I go for all sharing the privileges of the government who assist in bearing its burdens. Consequently, I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage who pay taxes or bear arms (by no means excluding females). * * * Whether elected or not, I go for distributing the proceeds of the sales of public lands to the several States, to enable our State, in common with others, to dig canals and construct railroads without borrowing money and paying the interest on it."

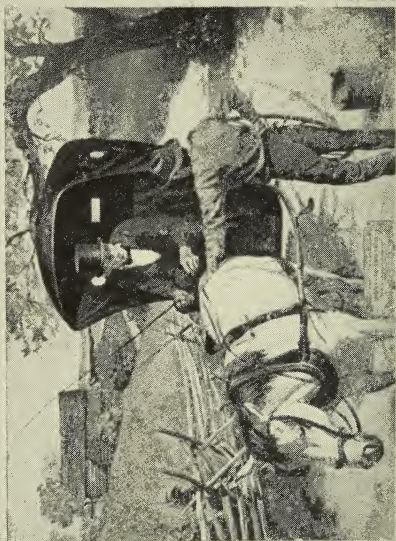
"In the election on August 1st Lincoln polled the highest vote of all the Sangamon candidates.

"On March 1, 1837, the Supreme Court granted him a certificate of admission to the bar. When the Legislature adjourned, on March 15, he returned to New Salem. But the town held no promise for him.



There was no chance there for a legal or a wider political career. Springfield, however, offered opportunities for both. Already Lincoln was well acquainted there, and his efforts in securing the removal of the capital had increased his popularity. John T. Stuart was willing to take him as his law partner. On April 15, 1837, Lincoln astride a borrowed horse, with all his personal possessions in his saddle-bags, moved to Springfield. Joshua Speed, a young merchant, learning that he did not have money enough to buy a bedstead, offered to share with him his double bed and large room above his store. Lincoln accepted gratefully. Slinging his saddle-bags over his arm, he climbed the stairs, deposited the bags on the floor and returned; and with his face beaming with smiles, remarked, 'Well, Speed, I'm moved.'

"In his six years at New Salem Lincoln had gone far. He could justly take pride in his progress. Coming to the village like 'a piece of floating driftwood,' as he said, he had worked his way up to a position of leadership not only in New Salem but in the state as well. He was recognized as a skillful politician. He had made valuable friendships in the county and the state at large. He had learned to think straight and express himself with force and



LINCOLN — THE CIRCUIT RIDER

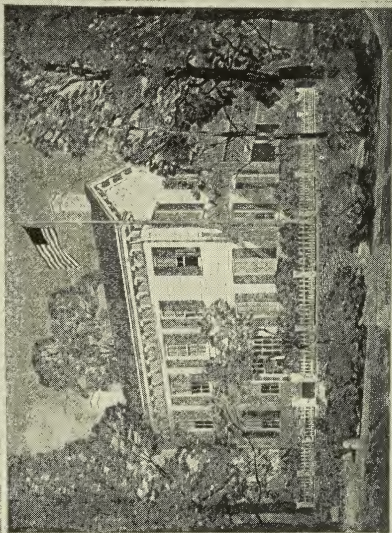
clarity. He had equipped himself to make a living with his brain instead of his hands.

“To New Salem he owed much. His associations there were more varied than any he had known in Kentucky, Indiana or his earlier home in Illinois. His advent there was a definite step forward—one that freed him from the retarding influence of his family and revealed to him the possibility of betterment.

“The New Salem years left a lasting impress. To the end of his life the rural background of his early years colored his writings and speech. Many of the similes and metaphors which enrich his literary style smack of the countryside. The ‘twang of the cross-roads’ was in his anecdotes. Often in later life he illustrated his remarks with rural analogies drawn from his New Salem experiences.”

Lincoln’s removal to Springfield marked the beginning of a new phase of his life which is a complete story in itself. He continued to be an outstanding figure, both resourceful and industrious, and his relatively few Springfield years earned not only the respect and confidence of the local community; but of the nation as well. His parting words to his friends at Springfield as he left to assume the grave burden to be placed on him as President of

LINCOLN'S HOME — SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS



the United States indicate his great depth of character. He said:

“My friends: No one not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being Who ever attended him I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him Who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.”

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE PIONEER," SPRING



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